

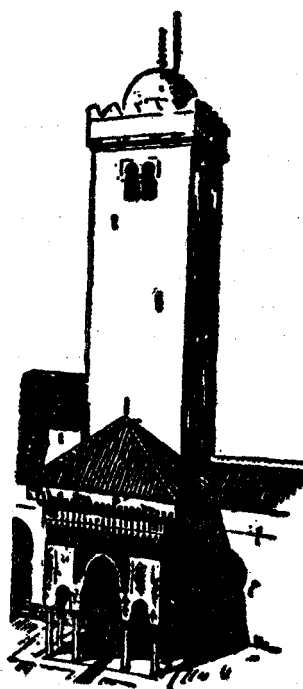
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UNIVERSITÉ MOHAMMED V

FACULTÉ DES LETTRES ET DES SCIENCES HUMAINES



HESPÉRIS TAMUDA



OL. XXVIII - Fascicule unique
1990

HESPERIS

TAMUDA

Vol. XXVIII. - Fasc. unique

1990

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THE SHARIF AND THE PADISHAH some remarks on Moroccan Ottoman relations in the 16 th century*

The text of a mid-eighteenth century *defter* from the *Cevdet Tasnifi* at the *Basbakanlık* Archives in Istanbul runs as follows:

“Magrip Padisahin Devlet-i Aliye’ye hediye ile v r d eden el isine tevabi’atiyle i’t  ve i s n buyurilan ta’y n t defteridir” (“This is the register of the allowances which are ordered to be given and granted to the ambassador of the Sultan of Morocco and his companions who have come to the Sublime State with gifts [sent by the Moroccan Sultan]”). (*Cevdet Tasnifi*, *Hariciye*, 4052, 5 M 1176/27 July 1762).

One notices two distortions in the official Ottoman nomenclature in addressing Moroccan rulers in this long sentence: the ruler is qualified as padishah (sultan) and the country is called Morocco, whereas the regular and recurrent usage, since the 16th century, was *F s H kimi*, ruler of the principality of Fez⁽¹⁾.

These distortions were certainly not an error of some scribe in the Ottoman central bureaucracy⁽²⁾. They showed the ground covered in Moroccan-Ottoman relations since the 16th century: i. e., the mutual recognition as two independent powers within the same abode of Islam. This stage was reached only through a three-century long process. It is not my intention to follow up here this process. Rather, I will focus on its early stages in the 16th century, after making some preliminary remarks on controversies connected with the Ottoman presence in Morocco.

* This paper draws on research conducted in Istanbul from July to December, 1988. My stay was funded By the Program in Near Eastern Studies, Princeton University, NJ, and the Moroccan-American Commission, Rabat, Morocco. I express here my thanks to these institutions. I am grateful to J. KATZ for his comments on an earlier version of this paper. Archival material relevant to the argument of this article will appear in the next issue of *Hesp ris-Tamuda*.

(1) In Turkey, still today, Morocco is named Fas: cf. *Fas B y k El isi* in Ankara.

(2) The bureaucracy was very careful on the choice of terms in the correspondence: whether a letter, for instance, was classified as a *h k m* (order) or a *name-i h may n* (sultanic letter) depended on the importance of its content.

CONTROVERSIES

The nature of the Ottoman presence in Morocco has been a controversial question with extreme positions held by both Turks and Moroccans. One example alone can show such exaggerations. The 4th of August is celebrated annually in Morocco and to much a lesser degree in Turkey as well, as the date of a victory of a resistant Islam against an invading Christianity. That is, the Portuguese army was routed in Northern Morocco (4 August 1578), in what was soon to be famous as "the Battle of the Three kings"⁽³⁾. A question which receives diametrically opposed answers concerns who won this victory. For Moroccan writers, of course, Moroccans were the heroes of the battle. If there were some janissaries, there must have been a little group of mercenaries at the service of the Moroccan sultan, the Sa'di 'Abd al-Mālik (Razuq 1986: I, 57-8).

Unsurprisingly, in Turkey, even in 1988, history for the public at large presents this victory as a 'zafer' (triumph) of only the janissaries. Accordingly, Moroccans were there just to help the big brother fight the enemy⁽⁴⁾. The same extremes prevail concerning the broad question of the Ottoman presence in Morocco. While Moroccan common sense and even some scholarly works would deny any Ottoman influence in Morocco, in Turkey, some historians would even find it quite natural to extend the map of Ottoman lands to the Atlantic Ocean⁽⁵⁾. Given the fact the two historical traditions ignore each other, is there any room for a balanced approach to Moroccan Ottoman relations? Some recent studies allow us to answer affirmatively⁽⁶⁾. Their main new feature is that they rely on data from both Moroccan and Turkish sources. However, in this direction, there remain new avenues for further thinking about Moroccan Ottoman relations. The aim of these remarks is to contribute in the same stream.

EMERGENCE OF TWO POWERS IN NORTH AFRICA

In 1510, the Spaniard Pedro Navarro conquered the city of Bougie, to the east of Algiers. In 1514, Baba Oruc, a "condottieri" [Laroui] of Ottoman origin, supported by local population, took a foothold in Djidjelli, just

(3) In fact, this battle has more than one name. Significantly, parallel names are given to it in Morocco and Turkey. To the Moroccan Al-Qasar and Wad āl-Makhāzin the Turkish vis-a-vis are Wadissebil or Wadiseyl.

(4) See for instance the article "Bir Agustos Zaferi" by Yilmaz Oztuna, *Tercuman*, 4 Agustos 1988, p. 6.

(5) So is the map at the **Topkapi** Museum entrance.

(6) A. Hess and D. Yahya among others. See the bibliography below.

tens of miles to the east of Bougie. That was the beginning of a century-long struggle between the Habsburgs and the Ottomans for domination over North Africa. This struggle was to end by a solid establishment of Ottoman power in Algeria, Libya and Tunisia (Ch. -A. Julien 1966: II, 252-4).

In 1505, the Portuguese established a fortress at Agadir in the south west of today's Morocco. In 1511, not far from Agadir, the population of the Sus region chose Muhammad b. 'Abd ar-Rahman, reputedly from sharifian origin and supported by the main brotherhood movement in the area, the *zawiya* Jazuliya, as chief of the holy war (*jihad*) and entrusted him with the responsibility of conducting it against the Portuguese in Agadir. Another century-long struggle was beginning here as well. This struggle, even though more reduced in scale than the first one, was to end by the establishment of a parallel power to the Ottoman one in North Africa, that of the Sharifian dynasties in Morocco (A. Laroui 1977 : 239, 247).

In both cases, new contenders were supported or chosen by the local population to lead the struggle both against the Iberian aggression and the weak resistance of local Muslim princes. The same historical context gave birth to two powers which opposed each other during part of the 16th century.

In the Ottoman center, was there any formal project for the conquest of Morocco? If ever such a project existed, its records at the Turkish Archives either have disappeared or are not yet open to research. Many signs, however, show that the attempts were numerous, whether locally decided in Algiers, or centrally ordered from Istanbul. Were these efforts intended to establish an Ottoman province in Morocco as was the case in Egypt and Algeria or were they meant to promote a dependent but largely autonomous power? This issue can only be addressed after a brief review of the major Ottoman attempts in Morocco.

OTTOMAN ATTEMPTS TO TAKE CONTROL ON MOROCCO

One of the major differences between the emergence of Ottoman power in Algiers and Tunisia and the first Ottoman attempts in Morocco is that in this latter case the Ottomans made a bad choice: they bet on the loser. Their first strong involvement in Morocco was to support the last Wattasid prince Bu Hassūn who had been ousted by the most energetic and vigorously anti-Ottoman Sa'di, Muḥammad al-Shaykh al-Mahdi (r. ca 1540-1557). Bu Hassūn was the only survivor from the declining Wattasid dynasty. He had tried his fortune, unsuccessfully, in Spain and Portugal, to recover his throne. The pasha of Algiers, Sāliḥ Reis, thought it a good policy to support him. In fact, he must have been aware of the cold feel-

ings of the population of Fez toward the Saʿdi ruler. The Anonymous writer describes the euphoria in which this population welcomed the returning Waṭṭasid in 1554 (Anon.: 18)⁽⁷⁾. Soon, however, they sought to get rid of the presence of the janissaries. When Sâliḥ Reis left Fez, Muḥammad al-Shaykh reoccupied the city, reserving a tragic end to the Ottoman ally, Bu Ḥassūn (Anon.: 21 ; Yahya 1981: 15 ; Hess 1978: 54-6).

This first attempt turned to nothing. The second important one occurred twenty years later and was, this time channeled through the Saʿdi legitimacy.

Al-Shaykh was killed in obscure circumstances. According to the earliest and most reliable Moroccan accounts, he was assassinated by a group of Ottoman envoys which had gained his confidence and were serving as his personal guards (Anon.: 27-8, Ilter 1935-7: In 169; Uzunçarçili 1983: 45-6)⁽⁸⁾.

In no less obscure circumstances, his sons came to a misunderstanding about the succession, and three of them had to flee to Ottoman territories to escape the threats of their reigning brother ʿAbd Allah al-Ghālīb (r. 1557-74). In a very skillful balance, this sultan succeeded in maintaining an equidistant position between Habsburgs and Ottomans and kept a policy of “rule without struggle” (Yahya 1981: 28). His brothers became slowly part of the local Ottoman clientage and eventually even members of the provincial administration in Western Algeria (MD 25: 3113, 342, 27 S 982/10 Feb. 1575).

The Padishah Selim II (r. 1566-74) tried several times to settle peacefully the issue between the brothers according to the broad view of Islamic tradition: Muslims should not fight each other. In reality, this was a good tactic for an implicit strategy: the goal was to weaken the Saʿdi power and the suggestion was to divide Morocco between the competing brothers. Al-Ghālīb, again true to his policy, sent gifts and declined the suggestion (MD 7: 2484, 907-8, 22 Ca 976/14 Dec. 1568).

His death in 1574 raised the question of succession anew. Among the fleeing brothers, the eldest ʿAbd al-Mumin had been assassinated, most likely under al-Ghālīb’s instigation. The two survivors ʿAbd al-Mālīk and Aḥmad had acquired a rich international political and military training. They would not allow their neophyte nephew to rule the country. The designs of ʿAbd al-Mālīk coincided with the designs of the Sublime Porte, right after the conquest of Tunis. The Ottoman attempt of 1576 channeled

(7) The anonymous is one of the earliest sources for this period.

(8) Turkish studies either reproduce Moroccan and French material about this episode (Ilter), or prefer simply to skip it (Uzunçarçili).

through the Saʿdi legitimacy was ordered by the Padishah Murat III (r. 1574-95) who decided to give support to ʿAbd al-Mālik’s projects of conquering Morocco against Muḥammad al-Mutawakkil (r. 1574-6) (Hess 1978: 95-6).

Here one can skip the details of the Ottoman expedition that accompanied ʿAbd al-Mālik and established him as an Ottoman dependent Saʿdi ruler in Fez. This expedition has already received close attention in various works (Cour 1904: 141-3; Ilter 1935-7: I, 194 ff; Yahya 1981: 66ff; Hess 1978: 95ff.) In many respects, this second Ottoman attempt was a repetition of the first one twenty years before. The Ottomans seemed to have come to stay. The Anonymous recorded how ʿAbd al-Mālik acted quickly in order to repay the expenses of the operation to Ramazan Pasha of Algiers and have the expeditionary troupes leave Fez (Anon. 1934: 52-3).

More relevant to our purpose are the perceptions and expectations of both the Ottoman sultan and the Moroccan prince after the conquest of Fez. One can glean them through the correspondence exchanged between the two rulers in the *Mūhimme* (MD 30).

For the short reign of ʿAbd al-Mālik (1576-8) more documents pertinent to Morocco were recorded in the *Mūhimme* than for the whole 17th century, for instance. This feverish epistolary activity is evidence of what is often imputed to ʿAbd al-Mālik, that he was a man widely open to the new means of modern administration (Yahya 1981: 72-3, 88, n.50).

The contents of these letters focus significantly on the fact that Algiers’ governors in particular and other Ottoman provinces’ administrators in general should not interfere with the affairs of the Saʿdi ruler. Although ʿAbd al-Mālik recognized the “suzerainty” of the Ottoman sultan by saying the Friday *khutba* (sermon) in the name of Murat III, he managed carefully not to be affiliated with the second center of Algiers⁽⁹⁾. The attitude of the Ottoman center can be grasped through three important letters sent to ʿAbd al-Mālik after his taking over in Morocco (MD 30: 489, 491, 492).

The first observation is that two of these letters were written in Arabic. This appears rather surprising in the case of a client who was most probably fluent in Turkish. The Ottoman sultan addressing other governors would consistently use Turkish, unless as in Algeria or Tunisia for instance, the letter is sent “to the people” of such city or region. On the other hand, the Sultan would address some rulers of particular status in Arabic: such was the case of the emir of Mecca and the king of Bornou (MD 30:494).

(9) Algiers was the local center for the whole North Africa before 1587 and even beyond this date which corresponds to the establishment of three distinct provinces in Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli.

The second observation is that there is something intriguing about these letters. The cataloguer affirms that the second and the third letters are simply the brief and the full Arabic versions of the first Turkish letter. Sure of his assumption, he goes on to date the three of them of 11 Rebiyülevvel 985 (29 May 1577). The fact that they were written down almost in a row (see the numbering) may suggest that they came to the hand of the scribe in the same package. This would mean that they were thought of and written in very close periods if not at the same time.

However, a quick look at the contents of these letters show that they correspond to two distinct moments of feeling at the center toward the newly conquered land, though no concrete proof can be put forward to substantiate the idea that they were actually drafted out in separate moments.

The first letter (489) is a lengthy text in Turkish informing ‘Abd al-Mālik that the news of the successes of the Ottoman expedition had reached Istanbul and urging him to work in close cooperation with the new pasha of Algiers, Ḥasan Pasha. The second (491) skips the news of the expedition and stresses the necessary cooperation between ‘Abd al-Mālik and Ḥasan Pasha. This must be a summary of the previous letter as recognized by the cataloguer. In effect, the Turkish text mentions at the end that a parallel text in Arabic was dispatched to ‘Abd al-Mālik. The main interest of the Arabic text is that it qualified ‘Abd al-Mālik clearly as *wālī wilayāt Fās*, the governor of the province of Fās.

The third one (492) insists again on the cooperation but this time in a very different tone. The role of the Padishah as Caliph is emphasized but ‘Abd al-Mālik is addressed as *Ḥākīm wilāyat Fās*, the ruler of the province of Fās. This seems to be an intermediary stage to the expression that was to become the authorized one: *Fās ḥākimi*, the ruler [of the principality] of Fās. Furthermore, this same letter concludes: *ḥatta yakūn al-mamlakatayn ka rūhayn fī jasad wa sā‘idayn fī ‘adud*, “[the mutual help is expected to be as strong] as the two states [countries or kingdoms] will be like two souls in one body or two forearms for the same upperarm”.

The body metaphors stress the unity of the Umma, which is altogether a religious, cultural and social correlate of the political or institutional notion of the caliphate. The figure two, given twice, stresses, rather, the distinction between two political powers within the Umma.

The extreme importance of this third letter lies in the fact that it shows how the Ottomans at the peak of their influence in Morocco perceived the horizon of a widely autonomous power in this region, though expected to be only and always a good ally.

How can one account for such a special status? Was it due to the skills of ‘Abd al-Malik who from the outset tried as aforementioned to autonomize his power in particular toward his neighbours in Algiers (MD 30: 467)? Was it due to some special treatment on the part of the Ottoman center as it could be inferred from the status of the Hijaz where other Sharifs were also granted relative autonomy at least until early 19th century? Or was it due to the peripheral and remote position of Morocco in regard to the heartland of the Ottoman Empire in which case Morocco would have been treated by the Ottoman establishment in the same frame as Bornou or India? Or, finally, was it due to an early “national” feeling of Moroccan identity which opposed and caused the failure of Ottoman attempts to establish a durable influence to the west of Oujda? All these elements may have intervened in an overlapping way, and yet, without further investigation, no definite answer is safe.

At any rate, the death of ‘Abd al-Mālik on the evening of the battle of Wād al-Makhāzin (1578) and the prestige gained by Morocco due to the outcome of this battle freed the hands of ‘Abd al-Mālik’s brother and successor Aḥmad (r. 1578-1603) who started a real policy of international competition with both Ottoman and European powers in the north west of Africa.

By 1587, when Algiers and Tunis were officially declared separate Ottoman provinces, the Sa’di regime was well established in Morocco, and for almost a decade, no serious Ottoman attempt to conquer it had occurred. the title of ḥākim applied to the Moroccan sultan, though somewhat belittling, was a common usage to qualify independent Muslim rulers (Orhonlu 1969: 119).

When in the 18th century the court scribes at Istanbul granted more than one previous ḥākim the honorific title of padishah, this vocable had lost much of its political weight. New struggles were clouding the horizon and new political settings and titles arose to face them.

Princeton February 2, 1989

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